

FROM THE CHAIR



As you all know, the Fifth International Tapir Symposium was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in October 2011. It was the very first time our tapir symposium was held in a Malayan tapir range country and I am happy to report it was a very successful, productive conference, with ample representation from several countries in Southeast Asia, as well as colleagues coming a long way from Latin America, United States and Europe.

As a consequence of the symposium in Malaysia and the high quality of the Malayan tapir papers presented during the conference, we decided to keep the momentum and dedicate this issue of Tapir Conservation to the endangered Malayan tapir! This issue includes a compilation of papers that provides a most detailed overview of the status of Malayan tapirs in the wild, the main threats faced by these animals and what is currently being done to promote the conservation of the species and its remaining habitat in Southeast Asia.

As for this Letter from the Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to give you a brief overview of the main results of the Fifth International Tapir Symposium in Malaysia.

The International Tapir Symposium is held every three years and it is without a question the main event of the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group. The main goals of the conference are to expand and maintain of a global network of tapir researchers and supporters and develop plans for them to work together and, most importantly, to increase awareness about tapirs on a global level through scientific, social, economic and political initiatives. The conference brings together a

multi-faceted group of tapir experts and conservationists, including field biologists and researchers, educators, husbandry and captive management specialists, veterinarians, geneticists, governmental authorities and non-governmental organization representatives, academicians, politicians, and other key players in the development and implementation of tapir research, conservation and management programs. Participants work together for five very intense days and carry out overviews of current tapir research, conservation and management issues, generating the necessary information to promote action planning and design priorities for the conservation of tapirs and their remaining habitats in Central and South America, and Southeast Asia. New approaches that include protected areas development and management, community-based conservation and education initiatives, population genetics, wildlife medicine, fundraising, and action planning, as well as environmental education, marketing, and public relation messages for tapir conservation are addressed and discussed.

The Fifth Symposium was extremely successful! We had a total of 92 participants from 22 countries worldwide (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, France, French Guiana, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Netherlands, Peru, Singapore, Spain, Thailand, United Kingdom, and United States).

The specific objectives of the Fifth Symposium were the following: (1) Exchange and discussion of current data on field and captive tapir studies through the presentation of papers, posters and keynote speeches by tapir conservationists (field and captivity); (2) Compilation and prioritization of key research, conservation, management and financial issues affecting the plight of tapir species worldwide; (3) Formulation of a list of specific areas, regions and projects that need attention, synergizing efforts from field and captive communities to maximize worldwide conservation initiatives; (4) Creation of committees, taskforces and working groups made up of tapir conservationists who are committed to addressing specific tapir conservation issues; (5) Formulation of a 3-year TSG Strategic Plan (2012-2014) that allows for the conference recommendations to be carried out and evaluated in future meetings; and, (6) Selection of a venue for the Sixth International Tapir Symposium.

The first part of the conference included paper and poster presentations as well as TSG Reports. Papers and posters covered a wide range of issues relevant to the conservation of tapirs and their remaining habitats, such as tapir ecology, field research, population management, threat assessments, husbandry and captive management, veterinary issues, genetics, implementation of action plans, habitat evaluations, research methodologies, identification of priority

areas for tapir conservation, Geographical Information Systems (GIS), environmental education etc. Paper sessions were organized by tapir species. In total, 17 papers were presented, 8 on Malayan tapirs, three on lowland tapirs, one on mountain tapirs, and five on Baird's tapirs. Eleven posters were exhibited throughout the conference and presenters were on hand to discuss their respective posters during the coffee breaks. Paper and poster presenters represented all four tapir species and many different tapir range countries in Central and South America and Southeast Asia.

The TSG Reports session included the following presentations: Claire Martin and Nathan Herschler from the Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leaders Program (EWCL) in the United States presented the incredible Tapir Press Kit they have developed for the TSG; Anders Gonçalves da Silva and Gabriela Pinheiro provided an overview of the activities of the TSG Genetic Committee; Anders Gonçalves da Silva presented the recent changes and improvements on the TSG's main publication, the Tapir Conservation newsletter; Patrícia Medici made presentations about the recent achievements of the TSG Marketing & Education Committee, the National Red List for Tapirs in Brazil, and provided the audience with an overview of the TSG's action planning activities at both the species and national levels; Jessica Amanzo, Fernando Nogales, Manolo García, José Trinidad Suazo, and Paula Gonzalez Ciccía provided the audience with updates on the development of National Action Plans for Tapirs in Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras and Argentina respectively.

The second part of the conference was devoted to workshops addressing specific topics including: (1) TSG Action Plan Implementation; (2) Ex-Situ Conservation and Management; (3) Tapir Conservation outside Protected Areas; (4) Implementation of Conservation Strategies in Landscape Planning; and, (5) Assessing Structural and Functional Landscape Connectivity for Tapirs.

The Workshop on Action Plan Implementation was organized by the TSG Action Plan Implementation Taskforce and facilitated by Bengt Holst, an active member of the Tapir Specialist Group and Convener of the European Network of the IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG), and Patrícia Medici, Coordinator of the Taskforce. During this session we reviewed the Tapir Action Plans developed during previous PHVA workshops (<http://www.tapirs.org/action-plan/index.html>) and evaluated the progress we have made on their implementation.

The Workshop on Ex-Situ Conservation and Management was organized and moderated by Michele Stancer, Chair of the AZA Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), and included six presentations covering topics

such as the captive management, breeding and transfer plans of captive tapirs in North America, the value of studbook keeping as a tool for the management of tapirs in captivity, the challenge of dealing with Tuberculosis in captivity, and genetic issues.

The Workshop on Tapir Conservation outside Protected Areas was designed and moderated by Dr. Eduardo Naranjo from ECOSUR, El Colegio de la Frontera Sur in Mexico. This workshop included four presentations by conservation professionals from Southeast Asia (Sivananthan Elagupillay, Malaysia, and Wilson Novarino, Indonesia), Central (Eduardo Naranjo, Mexico) and South America (Andrés Tapia, Ecuador) who provided their insights in terms of priorities for the conservation of tapir species outside protected areas.

The Workshop on Implementation of Conservation Strategies in Landscape Planning was organized and moderated by Dr. Carl Traeholt, Coordinator of the Malayan Tapir Project in Malaysia (Copenhagen Zoo). This session included four presentations by conservationists from Malaysia. Christian Schriver from CSC Consult in Malaysia talked about applications for the successful implementation of biodiversity conservation at the landscape level. Dr. Melvin Gumal from WCS Malaysia presented lessons learned with tiger conservation at the landscape level in Malaysia. Lim Teck Wyn from Resource Stewardship Consultants in Malaysia spoke about strategic planning and the creation of forest reserves in Peninsular Malaysia. Finally, José Manuel Mora and José Trinidad Suazo, Minister of Conservation and Forest Development of Honduras, made a presentation about the strategy for the implementation of the National Action Plan for Tapir Conservation in Honduras.

The Workshop on Assessing Structural and Functional Landscape Connectivity for Tapirs was designed and moderated by Manolo García and Fernando Castillo from Guatemala. The main goal of this workshop was to develop landscape connectivity assessment parameters and tools for the conservation and management of tapir species and their habitat. Results from this workshop will be extremely useful to assign landscape resistance values for connectivity modeling for tapirs.

Five keynote speakers made presentations throughout the conference: (1) Lord Gathorne Cranbrook, an icon of wildlife ecology and conservation in Southeast Asia, gave a most interesting speech about large mammals and the extinction crisis in Southeast Asia; (2) Y.BHG. Mislihah Binti Mohamad Basir, Deputy Director General of the Malaysian Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP), gave a speech about Malayan tapir conservation issues in Peninsular Malaysia; (3) Jeffrey Flocken from the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) in the United States

and also member of the Tapir Specialist Group's Steering Committee together with (4) Claire Martin from the Walt Disney Company, also in the USA presented an extremely interesting overview on how to approach and work with different types of funders; (5) Matthew Colbert from the University of Texas at Austin and TSG Evolution Consultant spoke about methods to assess age and maturity in tapirs based on dental eruption and cranial suture closure.

The last session of the conference was the TSG Strategic Planning 2012-2014 Workshop. The main goals of this session were to review the TSG Strategic Plan 2009-2011 developed during the Fourth International Tapir Symposium in Mexico in 2008 and evaluate what the TSG has accomplished over the past three years and then develop a new Strategic Plan for the group. Participants were requested to ask themselves "What goals should we accomplish as a group in order to be more effective in terms of tapir conservation worldwide?" and "What should be our main actions and initiatives in order to reach those goals during the next three years?" This session focuses on the functioning and short-term activities of the TSG itself. Long-term issues regarding the conservation of the four tapir species were carefully addressed during the Tapir Population and Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA) Workshops held for each tapir species between 2003 and 2007. Workshop facilitators Bengt Holst and Patrícia Medici guided the process of discussing issues brought up by participants and developing goals and priority actions to deal with them. We worked with five different working groups: (1) Communication/Marketing/Fundraising; (2) TSG Membership/TSG Structure/External Links; (3) Follow up on Tapir Action Plans; (4) Research/Protocols/Guidelines; and, (5) Education/Training.

The main outcome of TSG Strategic Planning 2012-2014 workshop was a list of priority actions and goals that will "guide & drive" the work of the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group over the next three years (2012-2014), creating and detailing specific tasks for each one of the TSG's different committees, taskforces and working groups. The final version TGS Strategic Plan 2012-2014 is available online on the TSG Website (<http://www.tapirs.org/symposium/index.html>).

The main organizers of the Fifth International Tapir Symposium were the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group, Malaysian Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP), Copenhagen Zoo in Denmark, Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), and European Association of Zoos & Aquaria (EAZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG). The Houston Zoo Inc. in the United States and the Copenhagen Zoo in Denmark provided institutional support for the process of raising and administering the funding for the conference.

The Fifth International Tapir Symposium had the financial and/or institutional support from 46 conservation organizations worldwide, including 42 zoological institutions - mostly tapir holding institutions in the United States (28), Europe (10), and Latin America (4) - as well as a governmental agencies (2) and non-governmental organizations (2). In addition, 48 other organizations sponsored the attendance of several participants. These organizations included zoological institutions, universities, research institutes, governmental agencies, international and national NGOs, conservation projects, private donors and corporations in North America, Europe, Latin America and Southeast Asia.

Thanks to the generous support from all these organizations we were able to cover the conference's expenses and sponsor the attendance of key participants from several tapir range countries, who otherwise would not have been able to attend the conference. I will never, ever have enough words to articulate how grateful we are for the support provided by all these organizations and for their belief that conserving tapirs is important! A complete list of institutional and financial supporters of the Fifth International Tapir Symposium can be found on the Symposium Final Report available for download on the TSG Website (<http://www.tapirs.org/symposium/index.html>).

On a final note, I would like to let you all know that the Sixth International Tapir Symposium will be held in BRAZIL in 2014. We do not have a date yet, but it will be most probably sometime around October/November. The symposium will be held in Campo Grande, the capital of Mato Grosso do Sul State, where I am based. Campo Grande is right next to the Pantanal, the largest continuous freshwater wetland on the planet, where I am currently working on tapirs! We will make sure to organize pre- and post-conference trips to the Pantanal and other amazing nature sites in the surroundings of Campo Grande! See you in 2014!!!

All the best,

Patrícia Medici

Chair, IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group (TSG)